

Message Text

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PAGE 01 NEW DE 05064 161829Z

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ACTION NEA-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-07 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-03 SS-20

USIA-15 OMB-01 DRC-01 /089 W
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R 161810Z APR 74

FM AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0893

INFO AMEMBASSY DACCA

AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU

AMCONSUL BOMBAY

AMCONSUL CALCUTTA

AMCONSUL MADRAS

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE NEW DELHI 5064

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, IN, SK

SUBJECT: SIKKIM ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS

SUMMARY: SIKKIM WENT TO THE POLLS YESTERDAY, APRIL 15, TO BEGIN A THREE-DAY ELECTION OF THE NEW 32- MEMBER SIKKIM ASSEMBLY. THE CENTRAL POINT ABOUT THIS EXERCISE IS THAT, WHILE IT MAY PROMOTE AMITY OR MORE SQUABBLING AMONG THE ETHNIC GROUPS' POLITICIANS IN SIKKIM, FMEC GIVE LITTLE DIRECT BEARING

ON ITS ADMINISTRATION. THE INDIANS WILL CONTINUE TO RUN THE PLACE AS THEY HAVE IN THE PAST. END SUMMARY.

1. THE MAY 1973 AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE GOI, THE CHOGYAL, AND SIKKIMESE POLITICAL PARTIES, WORKED OUT AFTER THE AGITATION IN MARCH-APRIL LAST YEAR, PROVIDES THAT THE ASSEMBLY CAN ONLY "PROPOSE LAWS AND ADOPT RESOLUTIONS" ON A LIMITED LIST OF INTERNAL ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL ISSUES. IT CANNOT DISCUSS THE CHOGYAL OR MATTERS RESERVED FOR THE GOI. INDIA'S ADMINISTRATIVE POWERS UNDER THE AGREEMENT ARE EXTREMELY BROAD,
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PAGE 02 NEW DE 05064 161829Z

INCLUDING APPOINTMENT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE WHO IN TURN APPOINTS

AND PRESIDES OVER AN EXECUTIVE COUNCIL WITH UNSPECIFIED DUTIES CONSISTING OF ELECTED MEMBERS OF THE ASSEMBLY. INDIA IS "SOLELY RESPONSIBLE" FOR DEFENSE AND EXTERNAL AFFAIRS. THE CHOGYAL'S ROLE IS TITULAR.

2. THE MAY 1973 AGREEMENT PROVIDES FOR ADULT SUFFRAGE ON THE PRINCIPLE OF ONE MAN, ONE VOTE (A KEY DEMAND BY AGITATIONS AMONG THE NEPALESE MAJORITY) AND THAT NO SINGLE SECTION OF THE POPULATION SHOULD ACQUIRE A DOMINATING POSITION (TO REASSURE THE LEPCHA/BHUTIA MINORITY AND THE CHOGYAL). AN INDIAN ELECTION COMMISSIONER WRESTLED WITH THE TASK OF RECONCILING THESE INCOMPATIBLE REQUIREMENT FOR MONTHS BEFORE COMING UP WITH A NEW ELECTORAL FORMULA.

3. IN SUM, THE NEW SYSTEM PROVIDES FOR 15 NEPALI AND 15 LEPCHA/BHUTIA SEATS IN THE ASSEMBLY AND ONE SEAT FOR SCHEDULED SCASTES AND ONE FOR THE MONASTERIES. FIFTEEN PREDOMINATLY NEPALI CONSTITUENCIES HAVE BEEN CARVED OUT IN THE WEST AND SOUTH OF SIKKIM, FOUR OF LEPCHA/BHUTIA POPULATION IN THE EAST, AND ELEVEN OTHERS OF MIXED POPULATION. IN NEPALI MAJORITY CONSTITUENCIES, EACH CANDIDATE MUST BE PROPOSED AND SECONDED BY 20 LEPCHA/BHUTIA VITERS.

4. WHILE SOME INDIA PRESS ACCOUNTS HAVE CHARACTERIZED THE NEW SYSTEM AS A STEP TOWARDS A DEMOCRATIC FORM OF GOVERNMENT, OTHERS HAVE REPORTED DISSATISFACTION AND MANEUVERING AMONG SIKKIMESE PARTIES AS THE ELECTIONS APPROACH. THE RESULTS ARE NOT EXPECTED TO BE ANNOUNCED UNTIL APRIL 22.
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